

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 08190 201129Z

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ACTION SS-30

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P 201027Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3427

S E C R E T BANGKOK 8190

EXDIS

DEPT PLEASE PASS OSD, JCS, CINCPAC, EMBASSIES LONDON, TEHRAN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, US, TH, IO

SUBJ: USN INDIAN OCEAN PATROLS FROM UTAPAO

REFS: (A) STATE 230701, 23 NOV 73 (NOTAL)

(B) CINCPAC PA/LNO 160159Z MAY 74 (NOTAL)

1. USE OF ROYAL THAI BASES FOR PATROL ACTIVITIES OVER INDIAN OCEAN BY US NAVY P-3BS SHOWS SIGNS OF BEING NEXT FLAP IN THAI/US RELATIONS, WITH CRITICISM AIMED AT WHETHER US HAS TRULY RESPECTED THAI SOVEREIGNTY AND HONORED COMMITMENT TO CONSULT REGARDING ALL US MILITARY ACTIVITIES FROM THAILAND.

2. FOREIGN MINISTER CHARUNPHAN WAS DIRECTLY QUERIED BY PRESS MAY 13 REGARDING RTG APPROVAL FOR P-3 AIRCRAFT IN THAILAND. HE DISCLAIMED ANY KNOWLEDGE AND LATER REFERRED THE REPORTERS TO THE SUPREME COMMAND, WITH WHOM EMBASSY HAS CLEARED INDIAN OCEAN PATROLS IN LIMITED TERMS AUTHORIZED REFTEL A. THE SAME DAY HIS PRIVATE SECRETARY SOUGHT CLARIFICATION FROM US AND POL CONSELOR LATER PROVIDED GENERAL INFORMATION REGARDING MISSION.

3. DESPITE CARE WITH WHICH CHARUNPHAN HAS HANDLED SUCH QUESTIONS, MFA HAS BEEN SOURCE OF SOME PRESS STORIES ALLEGING FAILURE TO OBTAIN RTG APPROVAL FOR US MILITARY

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BANGKO 08190 201129Z

ACTIVITIES. IN THIS REGARD, MFA SPOKESMAN PRACHA KHUNAKASEM

TOLD THE PRESS MARCH 28: "THAILAND ADHERES TO THE PRINCIPLE THAT AMERICAN MILITARY FORCES ARE STATIONED IN THAILAND AT PRESENT FOR THE SECURITY OF THIS REGION -- THAT THEY ARE CONCERNED WITH THE UNQUIET IN INDOCHINA ONLY." COINCIDENTALLY ON MARCH 26 EMBASSY HAD REQUESTED GENERAL KRIANGSAK TO INFORM MFA THAT WE HAD CONSULTED WITH SUPREME COMMAND RE INDIAN OCEAN ACTIVITIES, BUT WORD HAD NOT REACHED PRACHA. IN LIGHT OF RENEWED PRESS INTEREST, WE ARE TAKING STEPS TO ASSURE THAT PRACHA AS WELL AS FONMIN IS INFORMED REGARDING INDIAN OCEAN PATROLS.

4. DURING MAY 15 PRESS VISIT TO UTAPAO RTNAB FOR B-52 DEAPRTURE, ONE P-3B TOOK OFF IN FULL VIEW OF ASSEMBLED CORRESPONDENTS, INSPIRING MANY QUESTIONS. BOB KAYLOR OF UPI HAD ALREADY BEEN RAISING QUESTIONS AND HAD REQUESTED VISIT TO P-3B UNIT AND OPPORTUNITY TO TALK WITH AIR CREWS, WHICH WAS TURNED TOWN ON THE SPOT. MAY 16 "BANGKOK POST" CARRIED FRONT PAGE ARTICLE AND PHOTO (REF B), PROBABLY BASED ON KAYLOR'S INFORMATION.

5. CONTINUING CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING DIEGO GARCIA EXPANSION PLANS IS BOUND TO HEIGHTEN PRESS INTEREST IN THIS PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLICIZED US ACTIVITY. FURTHERMORE, ANY PRESS VISIT TO DIEGO GARCIA, UNLESS ELABORATELY STAGE MANAGED, WOULD SEE P-3BS FROM UTAPAO ON THE RAMP; ENTERPRISING JOURNALISTS COULD BE EXPECTED TO UNCOVER SUBSTANTIAL INFORMATION THERE ALSO ABOUT THEIR MISSIONS INTO BANDAR ABBAS.

6. WE ALSO UNDERSTAND FROM MILITARY SOURCES THAT USN PATROLS OVER INDIAN OCEAN FROM UTAPAO HAVE CONTINUED FOLLOWING APRIL DEPARTURE OF KITTY HAWK TASK FORCE, CONTRARY TO GUIDANCE REFTEL A WHICH WAS CONVEYED TO RTG THROUGH SUPREME COMMAND, EVEN IF SCHEDULE FOR FUTURE MONTHS WILL BE REDUCED FROM NOVEMBER-APRIL LEVEL, WE CONSIDER IT ESSENTIAL TO KEEP RTG ACCURATELY INFORMED. REQUEST AUTHORITY.

7. WE ALSO BELIEVE TIME HAS COME TO GIVE URGENT RENEWED CONSIDERATION TO PREPARING PUBLIC STATEMENTS
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BANGKO 08190 201129Z

AND/OR CONTINGENCY REPLIES TO QUERIES GOING SUBSTANTIALLY FURTHER THAN GUIDANCE PREVIOUSLY PROVIDED THROUGH MILITARY CHANNELS TO REFUSE COMMENT ON RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHTS AND SAY ONLY THAT P-3S CONDUCT OFFICIAL SURVEILLANCE AND SUPPORT TASK GROUP OPERATIONS AS REQUIRED.

8. FOR CINCPAC: WE ARE SERIOUSLY INTERESTED IN SUMMARY OF CURRENT ACTIVITIES REQUESTED BY MACTHAI 160850Z MAY 74.

WE ALSO REQUEST FUTURE MONTHLY MISSION INTENT MESSAGES
FROM CTF 72 INCLUDE MORE COMPLETE DETAILS ON ROUTINGS
OF AIRCRAFT STAGING IN AND OUT OF UTAPAO WHICH MAY OPERATE
OUTSIDE OF CLOSED RECONNAISSANCE AREAS OUTLINED IN CTU
72.3.5 MESSAGE OF 260950Z APRIL 74.
MASTERS

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED ABOVE ADDRESSEES.

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